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Weekly Newspaper of the Year 2011

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DESOLATE: How
bailiffs left Dale
Farm this week



DALE FARM TURNED INTO A WASTELAND

Gypsy caravan site unrecognisable four weeks on

Joshua Farrington
and Sam Smith

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IT IS LESS than a month since police stormed the barricades of Dale Farm, and already the once-proud community has all but vanished.

The caravans and chalets that made up the homes of dozens of traveller families have been removed, leaving a barren land-

scape of muddy trenches and piles of rubble.

Basildon Council had expected firm Constant & Co to clear the site within six to eight weeks, but the work has been finished in four.

Hardstanding from roads and pitches at the illegal site has been dug up and formed into bunds - huge earthworks which prevent vehicles returning to Dale Farm. Some of the travellers legally

entitled to stay say they have been injured clambering over the debris, a situation the council says it is looking into.

Moved

Meanwhile, many families from the site have moved mere yards down the road, to pitch their caravans with friends and family on the neighbouring legal plots.

Although the eyes of the global

media may have turned away from Crays Hill, the final chapter of Dale Farm does not appear to have been written yet.

Speaking to the Gazette, gypsy spokesman Richard Sheridan insisted: "There will be gypsies on Dale Farm for a thousand years."

■ To see more of a very different Dale Farm, turn to pages 20&21



DEATH: Dr Ravi Sockanathan Doctor died of a heart attack on trip abroad

A WELL-KNOWN family doctor from Billericay died of a heart attack during a trip to his home country.

Dr Ravi Sockanathan, who seven years ago set up the Brambles Surgery in Geary Drive, Brentwood, was in Sri Lanka when he woke in the middle of the night with shortness of breathe and died just hours later, away from his family and friends in Britain.

He was 61, and his death came just days before his grandson Thiren celebrated his first birthday.

Dr Sockanathan lived with his wife Sujatha, 52, and their 14-year-old daughter Priya in Boleyn Close.

Shock

His son, Dr Sanjeev Sockanathan, 33, said the heart attack came as a complete shock to the family.

He said: "It was just three days into his visit. He had done a few lectures and presented a couple of times."

His family flew straight to Sri Lanka when they heard the news, but were unable to reach him before he died on Friday, October 28.

Patients, colleagues and anyone who knew Dr Sockanathan are invited to attend a memorial service being held in London on December 4.

■ Tributes to a loving father on page 12

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